

Western Washington *Endangered Species Division*



■ *Western Snowy Plover*



■ *With the help of volunteers, planting golden paintbrush on Whidbey Island*



■ *Golden paintbrush, a threatened plant*

Background

The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and our sister agency, NOAA Fisheries, are responsible for implementing the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, and several other environmental laws.

Who We Are

The Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office Division of Endangered Species is a diverse group of ecologists and fish and wildlife biologists with wide-ranging experience and expertise who specialize in the conservation biology of endangered species. The Division is organized into two branches.

The Branch of Consultations and Technical Assistance works with Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other cooperators to develop conservation measures to reduce impacts of federally-funded, permitted, or implemented projects to ESA-listed species. We provide technical assistance about listed species, including information on their vicinity of proposed projects, and suggest ways that agencies and other organizations can carry out their projects and activities with minimal impact to ESA-listed species.

The Branch of Listing and Recovery concentrates on the review and assessment of the status of Federal candidate species and species that may require the protection of the ESA. If such protection is determined to be warranted, we document their decision and prepares the appropriate listing materials to carry

the action forward.

Who We Serve

- Private citizens
- Federal agencies
- States
- Local governments
- Tribes
- Public interest groups
- National Fish Hatcheries, National Wildlife Refuges and other FWS facilities

What We Do

When a species becomes a candidate, or is proposed for listing under the ESA, we work with agencies and organizations to develop conservation measures that may help preclude the need to list the species. If these measures are not sufficient to remove the threat of extinction, we coordinate with our conservation partners to assess the best scientific information available to make a determination on whether the species requires the protection of the ESA, and at what level. For example, we recently added two species of butterfly, the mardon skipper and the Taylor's checkerspot, Mazama pocket gophers, and the streaked horned lark to the list of candidate species.

If ESA protection is determined to be required, the species is listed and a determination to designate critical habitat is made. We then target recovery actions and tasks to begin recovery of the species. We establish recovery teams, develop recovery plans, and issue permits to implement recovery tasks, including scientific research and restoration of habitat to promote recovery. We recently com-

James Michaels
Division Manager
Western Washington FWO
510 Desmond Dr. SE, Suite 102
Lacey, WA 98503
Phone: 360-753-9440
Fax: 360-534-9331
E-mail: james_michaels@fws.gov

pleted the draft recovery plan for the Wenatchee Mountains checkermallow and the Columbia River Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the bull trout. We have also proposed the designation of critical habitat for the Columbia River DPS of the bull trout. Currently we are developing the recovery plan and a proposal to designate critical habitat for the Coastal/Puget Sound DPS of the bull trout. We are also working with other FWS offices on a five-year review of the status of Northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets.

We are also active participants in the development of the Shared Salmon Strategy, a multi-agency effort to address the needs of native fish in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Because salmon and bull trout have many shared habitat requirements, efforts to protect and conserve one species can have beneficial effects on the other. Coordination of protection, restoration, and enhancement efforts between agencies and other organizations will increase their effectiveness and provide taxpayer value while minimizing impacts to public and agency activities.

To help recovery efforts for ESA-listed species we provide funding to State agencies through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Grants. In Washington, such funding has created multi-year recovery projects for grizzly bears, western snowy plovers, marbled murrelets, woodland caribou, and a number of plant species. On the ground surveys for ESA candidate and listed species in coordination with our Federal, State and non-governmental partners have helped us document additional populations of Mardon Skipper butterflies and survey for the presence of bull trout.

We work closely with other FWS divisions and programs to coordinate research, candidate assess-

ments, recovery, and habitat restoration efforts. This helps us coordinate the FWS response to requests for consultations under section 7 of the ESA. For instance we are participating in a four-year project with the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge to establish new populations of Columbian white-tailed deer within their historical range on a series of islands in the Columbia River. This project will result in increased population numbers, reduce the likelihood of extinction, and increase the potential for species recovery and eventual removal from the ESA list.

In some cases we issue special regulations such as 4(d) rules which allow agencies and the public to carry out specific activities while providing safeguards for species and their habitat.

Another important part of our work is conducting consultations with other Federal agencies under section 7 of the ESA. Through this process we help agencies avoid or minimize the impacts of federally-funded, permitted, authorized, or implemented actions to ESA-listed species. For example we recently completed consultations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Makah and Quinault Indian Nations on their Forest Management Plans. These plans provide for timber harvests on tribal lands to help the Tribes meet their economic goals while implementing conservation measures to reduce impacts to ESA-listed species such as marbled murrelets, bald eagles, and bull trout. In rare cases where impacts of a proposed project jeopardize an ESA-listed species, prohibited under the ESA, and cannot be avoided, we work with the involved agencies to develop reasonable and prudent alternatives that will not jeopardize the species.

The twelve counties surrounding Puget Sound are home to two-thirds of Washington's population.

Another 1.3 million people are expected to move there by 2025. These population concentrations and increases put huge demands on public facilities such as highways, water systems, and other support infrastructure. This emphasizes the need to minimize impacts on ESA-listed fish and wildlife resources. It also focuses intense pressure on the need for a timely and effective consultation process. For several years we have worked closely and successfully with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, the Federal Highway Administration, the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, Transportation, and Natural Resources, and federal, state, and local elected officials to improve our consultation process. In 1989 we processed 189 consultation requests. In 2003 we processed over 500.

We have initiated cross-state recovery planning with other FWS offices in Washington and Oregon to better coordinate planning and implementation efforts for a number of ESA-listed and candidate species that occupy both Washington and Oregon.

Under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, we work as partners with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to conserve and protect Washington's sea otter population. We conduct joint survey and research projects to determine population levels, condition, health, and distribution. We have developed a coordinated program to report strandings and respond to other sea otter issues.